



REP. BELLA S. ABZUG

THOMAS S. GREENISH

REP. JOHN E. MOSS

... subcommittee members heard testimony from Western Union official, center.

Western Union Official Details NSA Cable Copying

By Walter Pincus

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Western Union International Inc. disregarded administration requests yesterday and gave a House subcommittee records concerning a secret National Security Agency intelligence program.

Thomas S. Greenish, executive vice president of the company, testified that the program, which was discontinued in 1935, involved copying foreign government cables being transmitted from New York. Each day, an NSA courier would pick up the copies of the cables, he said.

The House subcommittee had subpoenaed company records and Western Union turned over lists of countries targeted by the program.

Officials of RCA Global Communications also testified about turning over its international cable traffic and foreign government telex message phone line numbers to the FBI in Washington and the NSA in New York. That program, according to the witnesses, ended in mid-1975.

RCA said it had no documents to turn over in response to the subcommittee subpoena.

Attorney General Edward H. Levi wrote RCA and

Western Union's lawyers 10 days ago to ask Greenish and RCA officials not to appear before the Government Operations subcommittee. Levi noted that President Ford had asserted executive privilege to bar testimony by NSA and other government officials.

Western Union received a letter Tuesday from Richard Wiley, Defense Department general counsel, which sought to discourage the company from appearing.

Greenish said that faced with the subcommittee subpoena on the one hand and the administration letters on the other, he felt "caught like a piece of baloney between two slices of bread."

The final decision to turn over documents and testify was not made until an hour before the hearing began, according to Greenish. The company officials "did not want to face going to jail" for contempt of Congress, one member of the subcommittee said later, "on the basis of a request from the Attorney General."

Rep. Bella S. Abzug (D-N.Y.), chairman of the Government Information and Individual Rights Subcommittee, which ran the hearings, called the administration's attempt to halt yesterday's testimony "a sham and a mockery of the whole Con-

stitution and the separation of powers."

White House officials have argued that by compelling through subpoena public testimony from corporations involved in past or present intelligence operations, Congress may add to the growing reluctance of companies and individuals to participate in these activities.

The outline of the cable copying program, called Operation Shamrock, was first disclosed in November by the Senate intelligence committee.

Western Union, RCA and International Telephone & Telegraph Corp.'s World Communications Inc., along with NSA and the FBI provided depositions and testified at closed Senate Committee hearings.

Operation Shamrock was after the Senate intelligence closed down in May, 1975, committee made its first approach to NSA for a run-down on its activities, the committee has said.

Although the cable-copying program has ended, the witnesses testified that international cables and telex messages could be monitored by NSA without the cooperation of the companies.